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The truth behind 'Reagan plan to kill Gaddafi'

THE UNITED STATES raid on Libya last April was an assassination attempt against the Libyan leader, Colonel Gaddafi, according to a report by the American author Seymour Hersh, writing in the *New York Times* magazine today.

The raid killed more than 20 Libyan civilians and caused minor injuries to Gaddafi's wife and two sons. Gaddafi was unhurt.

The attempt was plotted in great secrecy by military and civilian officials in the National Security Council and involved Admiral John Poindexter, the former NSC director, and Lieutenant-Colonel Oliver North, an NSC aide who was sacked by President Reagan. At the same time both officials were secretly planning the shipment of arms to Iran.

If Hersh's evidence, based on more than 70 unnamed American sources, is correct, then North, Poindexter and other NSC officials have broken United States law. In 1978 President Carter passed an executive order banning assassinations. President Reagan's involvement in the plot against Gaddafi is "difficult to assess," Hersh writes.

In fact the President initially resisted the decision to bomb Libya. An unnamed NSC official told Hersh: "There was no executive order to kill and no administrative directive to go after Gaddafi." A former official quotes Colonel North as saying: "They have covered their tracks beautifully."

However, there are many flaws in Hersh's analysis. He says that Colonel North suggested that the United States navy should land a team of sailors on the beach near the Aziziya barracks and set up a laser beam to guide the bombs on to their target.

This was opposed by the Joint Chiefs of Staff—a good decision because the barracks are not near the beach. North suggested use of the top secret Stealth fighter-bombers to slip past Libyan radar, Hersh says. This was also opposed.

The raid was launched after what the White House called the "irrefutable evidence" of Libyan involvement in the bombing of La Belle Discotheque in West Berlin. This evidence was based on the interception by intelligence of messages from Tripoli to Libyan agents in East Berlin.

Hersh maintains the evidence was challenged by West German officials, and is now doubted by some experts inside the National Security Agency.

by David Blundy in Washington
who was in Tripoli at the time of the raid

In fact United States and British intelligence officials have told *The Sunday Telegraph* that the messages from Tripoli to the Libyan agents in East Berlin were intercepted by the British and sent to GCHQ in Cheltenham. They were then passed to the United States.

Hersh also says that CIA information about a five-man Libyan hit team which the White House claimed was sent by Gaddafi to assassinate President Reagan in 1981 was fabricated by the CIA director Mr William Casey. However American and British intelligence officials have told The Sunday Telegraph that evidence about the Libyan hit teams did exist.

The former head of the State Department's Office for Counter Terrorism, Mr Robert Oakley, who is now a member of the NSC, said that Gaddafi discussed the hit teams in a meeting with President Mengistu of Ethiopia. "There was also other evidence. We could not ignore it," said Oakley.

Hersh maintains that the Administration plotted a number of covert operations against Libya between 1981 and 1984. One of them involved calling on "disaffected elements" in the Libyan military who might be persuaded to assassinate Gaddafi. United States officials also knew, Hersh writes, of two unsuccessful French operations to assassinate or overthrow Gaddafi in 1984.

The main targets in the bombing raid last April were Gaddafi's tent and his residence in the Aziziya barracks, Hersh says. He quotes an Air Force pilot saying: "The assassination was the big thing." He also quotes "an Air Force intelligence officer" who says that the pilots were provided with photographs which showed "where Gaddafi was and where his family was." The idea of attacking his family came from senior CIA officers.

Israeli intelligence "pinpointed Gaddafi's exact location during the night of the raid, Hersh writes. The Israelis told the United States that Gaddafi was at work in his tent "two hours and 45 minutes before the first bombs fell."

If Hersh's account is true then Israeli intelligence was absurdly inaccurate. Gaddafi does not work or sleep in his tent in the Aziziya barracks. It serves mainly a ceremonial function.

Gaddafi works, sleeps and entertains in his office and living quarters deep below ground in the well-fortified administration building in the barracks. This is connected by a tunnel with his military headquarters, also below ground. He spent the evening before the raid in his living quarters.

Hersh also repeats the fiction that Gaddafi's 15-month-old adopted daughter was killed in the raid. It is now accepted that Gaddafi did not have an adopted daughter. A photograph of him holding a child was produced for Libyan propaganda purposes.

He also maintains that the administrative buildings and command centre in the Aziziya barracks were not hit by bombs. This is true, but like Gaddafi's tent and the residence where his wife lived, the bombs scored near misses.

Hersh correctly reports that many members of the US intelligence community did not believe that Gaddafi was—as the White House, CIA and NSC maintained—the world's major exporter of terrorism. Analysts in the CIA and State Department have long maintained that Syria and Iran posed a greater danger to American interests.

● AP reports from Washington: The Navy and Air Force have handed out more than 200 medals to the airmen who participated in actions against Libya last year. Six pilots were awarded one of their service's highest awards, the Distinguished Flying Cross.

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by Graham Turner
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A B D E F H

Labour tears at poll smear campaign

by Walter Ellis and Donald Macintyre

LABOUR'S Greenwich by-election campaign was thrown into turmoil yesterday when the party claimed that its candidate, Mrs Deirdre Wood, was the victim of a smear campaign by a Sunday newspaper.

The *News of the World* discovered that Mrs Wood's father, Charles, had died of alcoholic poisoning in an East London Salvation Army hostel.

A tearful Mrs Wood called a news conference to rebut allegations which she feared would imply that she was in some way culpable because of the circumstances of here father's death.

At the end of a parliamentary week in which cross-party abuse has reached new depths, yesterday's developments at Greenwich introduced an unpredictable element to a contest in which the Alliance is threatening to dislodge Labour from one of its traditional strongholds.

The *News of the World* admitted last night that an article had been prepared by Mr Stuart Collier, a staff reporter, on Mrs Wood and the death of her father seven years ago. But the editor, Mr David Montgomery, insisted that he had decided yesterday morning not to use the story.

However, Mr Brian Raymond, of Bindman's, the solicitors called in yesterday by the Labour Party to represent Mrs Wood, said that the paper had decided against publishing after being threatened with an injunction under the Representation of the People Act, 1983. He said that not only had it come forward with "totally defamatory" allegations but had made the situation "100 per cent worse" by refusing to take the opportunity of hearing the facts.

Mrs Wood told the Press conference that her father had died of cirrhosis of the liver. He had been an extremely violent man, who had once thrown boiling water over her first husband and had beaten both herself and her mother. Her own son, at the age of two, had nearly died after an incident involving her father.

When her mother, Frances, finally decided she could no longer live with her husband, she had tried to persuade him to accept specialist help, but he had refused. Instead, he had entered a Salvation Army hostel, where he died in 1979. The Labour candidate told journalists: "I had not expected to be smeared like this. I did not expect this vilification." This by-election isn't about me and my family. It's about jobs and houses."

The effect on her campaign had been "catastrophic," she added. "I hope they can live with themselves after this."

Mrs Wood resumed campaigning last night amid suggestions that she could well attract a substantial sympathy vote on Thursday.

Dirty tricks

Meanwhile, the row over personal abuse aimed at and by leading politicians worsened yesterday with a claim that a rift has developed between Mr John Wakeham, Government Chief Whip, and Conservative Central Office, *writes Robert Porter.*

Labour sources claimed the recent spate of personal attacks on Mr Kinnock stemmed from "dirty tricks" department which Mr Tebbit, Conservative Party chairman, had set up within Central Office.

Judah Passow

Deirdre Wood, Labour's Greenwich candidate, is comforted by Frank Dobson, MP.

Pas de deux: Eric Bonneval sweeps England forward Gary Pearce off his feet at Twickenham.

England fade to France

Sunday Telegraph Reporter

England lost 19–15 to France in the Five Nations Championship at Twickenham yesterday; Scotland opened their international season with a 16–12 victory over Ireland.

England led 12–3 at the interval before a surge by France broke down their resistance with two crucial tries.

In the FA Cup Northern clubs Wigan Athletic and Leeds United surprised rivals from higher divisions to reach the last eight. Third Division Wigan beat Hull 3–0, while Leeds overcame First Division Queens Park Rangers 2–1.

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Cancer link feared with insulation in 16m homes

by Donald Macintyre Political Editor

THE Department of Health and Social Security is carrying out an urgent investigation into reports that insulation material used in 16 million British homes could help to cause lung cancer.

Worried Environment Department officials, alerted to the possible dangers by a World Health Organisation report, have asked the DHSS to commission an expert study of risk to householders from man-made mineral and glass fibres on the Government's approved list of insulation materials.

The DHSS has asked its Committee on Carcinogenicity, made up of independent medical experts, to report to ministers within the next few weeks on the properties of the fibres, which have been used, since 1979 alone, in Government-funded insulation of two million homes.

The most common household use of the fibres is in loft insulation for which successive Governments have campaigned for many years.

The mineral fibre industry, with a turnover of £150 million a year, has more than 80 per cent of the domestic insulation market.

Following a meeting of DHSS and Environment officials last week, the DHSS study is expected to examine whether there is any risk to people living in houses containing the material as well to those actually installing it.

The investigation follows an international scientific symposium convened by the European office of the World Health Organisation in Copenhagen last October, at which experts took the view that the fibres had the potential to increase lung cancer. Several other governments, including that of Sweden where the fibres are also widely used, have also been alerted.

The Department of Environment request was made after the DHSS had already commissioned a study from a team of experts, led by Professor Ken Weinbren of Hammersmith Hospital, into possible workplace risks in the man-made fibre industry. The workplace study was ordered after a request from the Health and Safety Commission.

The Department of the Environment and the DHSS said yesterday that the report on workplace risks was expected shortly. The departments said that on the basis of findings so far "the levels of fibre in the air are understood to be extremely low and such as to cause no anxiety."

Experts are now examining additional data

Eurisol, the industry's trade body, said yesterday that the World Health Organisation report had exonerated mineral fibre from causing the malignant tumour Mesotheleoma, which is associated with blue asbestos. It said the report had disclosed a small increase in lung cancer among people who had worked in mineral fibre manufacture for many years, but that all those cases had related to the period before the industry introduced a special dust-suppressing agent in the 1950s.

Eurisol, whose member industries directly employ 2,500 people in manufacturing, insists that there is now no risk either to production workers or the general public.

Syria on edge of Beirut bloodbath

Israeli warplanes are monitoring the movements of a 4,000-strong Syrian force, supported by 100 tanks, which is advancing to quell factional fighting in Beirut that has left 200 dead and 400 wounded in the Moslem sector of the Lebanese capital.

Lebanon's Prime Minister Mr Rashid Karami and other Moslem leaders appealed to Damascus to help stem the bloodletting, but President Assad of Syria is said to be reluctant to commit his army to the Lebanese cauldron.

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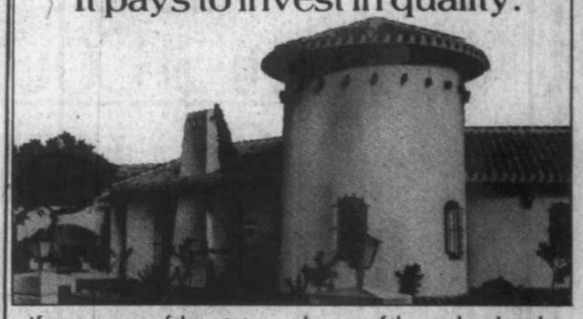

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Gummer threat to quit C of E

by Robert Porter

THE ROW over women priests, which has split the Church of England, reached a new level last night when Mr John Selwyn Gummer, a Government Minister, warned he would quit the Church if the ordination of women was permitted.

Mr Gummer, a member of the General Synod of the Church of England, is likely to be joined in his protest by Mr Peter Bruinvels, Conservative MP for Leicester East, and also a Synod member. As high churchmen and prominent Anglo-Catholics, both men may well be drawn towards Rome if the Church of England suffers a split over the issue.

In a BBC TV interview to be screened today, Mr Gummer, Agriculture Minister, gives a strong hint that he might become a Roman Catholic. He and his family viewed the proposals with very great sadness because they would be driven out of the Church, he said.

"I find myself, like so many others, thrust out and would have tontry to find a home."

Mr Bruinvels said he would boycott any service conducted by a woman priest and added that he, too, might find it impossible to remain in the Church of England.

Meanwhile, Conservative MPs' pledged last night to launch a major campaign of opposition in the Commons if, as expected, the Synod this week gives approval to the ordination of women priests.

The meeting of the General Synod will be asked to approve a report by the House of Bishops calling for legislation which would allow women to be ordained as priests.

A bitter clash is predicted between supporters of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Robert Runcie, and the faction led by Dr Graham Leonard, the Bishop of London, which strongly opposes the move and believes it will split the Church.

Last night, Mr Bruinvels served notice that he would lead a major campaign of parliamentary opposition should the House of Bishops' recommendations be approved on Thursday.

At the Synod's meeting, Dr Runcie will dissociate himself from Dr Leonard's warning of a split.

Before parliamentary approval is sought, the legislation will have to be discussed again at length by the Synod, then by dioceses. It must finally secure a two-thirds majority in each of the Synod's three "houses"—the bishops, clergy and laity.

A step towards ordaining women priests will come on Tuesday when it becomes legally permissible to ordain women deacons. About 170 women are expected to be ordained and will be able to undertake most duties of the priesthood apart from communion and burial services.

The plot to isolate Bishop Leonard — P4; Editorial Comment—P22.

BBC choice of seven

by David Wastell

THE SEVEN names on the BBC's final shortlist of applicants for the job of director-general include "no obvious managerial talent of the sort needed to turn the corporation round," according to broadcasting sources.

The result is that the BBC's governors are likely to be divided after concluding their job interviews on Thursday.

A possibility is now even being considered that they postpone the decision for six months.

Already there are signs that the forced resignation of Mr Alasdair Milne last month caused more disarray among the board than was originally supposed. Immediately after the meeting at which Mr Milne was told to quit, one of the governors, the Earl of Harewood, also resigned.

The shortlist includes four BBC names.

Front runner among those from outside is still Mr Jeremy Isaacs of Channel 4.

The other outside candidates are Mr Nigel Ryan, 56, former ITN chief, now an independent producer; and Mr Anthony Smith, 48, director of the British Film Institute.

Mr David Dimbleby, 48, the broadcaster who also runs his family's newspaper business, is the other front-runner.

The other BBC candidates are Mr Michael Checkland, Mr Milne's deputy and now acting director-general; Mr Brian Wenham, managing director of BBC Radio; and Mr Michael Grade, director of programmes, BBC Television.

A 2,000-word reply to allegations by Mr Ian Curteis about the way his pro-Government play about the Falklands was cancelled by the BBC has been blocked at a senior level within the corporation.

Mr Peter Goodchild, head of drama, was told, after all, not to submit his side of the story to *The Sunday Telegraph*.

Instead Mr Bill Cotton, managing director of television, sent a 400-word letter, published on page 23.

Mob attacks police

THE family of a black Wolverhampton man, who died resisting arrest on Friday, appealed for calm last night after a mob attacked a police line in the town centre.

Missiles were thrown at officers and looters smashed shop windows when football fans became mixed up with black youths protesting over the death of West Indian Clinton McCurbin, 23, who died after a struggle with two constables arresting him for using a stolen bank card.

There were 32 arrests and 200 extra police were drafted into the area to prevent further disturbances. McCurbin's uncle, Mr Lascelle McKoy, said: "I appeal for calm. Rioting cannot help Clinton now." But he claims that the police used "excessive force" on his nephew.

Home Office pathologists say McCurbin's death was due to asphyxia consistent with restraint during a struggle.

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